How to Foster Great College Teaching

By Joseph G. Smoot

Teaching and learning are the central concerns in any school. Creative, exciting teaching is no accident. Although many teachers are personally motivated to excel, all teachers will develop professionally when those guiding the academic affairs in a college give thoughtful attention promoting a general concern for the best possible teaching performance. The college administration should sponsor programs that encourage the faculty individually and collectively to improve their teaching skills.

While different approaches can and should be developed for each college, some methods of stimulating good teaching are generally recognized to be of value. It is important to plan definite ways of keeping teaching excellence under continuing review. Here are some of the ways that I, as a university president, have fostered an on-going discussion about teaching:

1. Establish a reading program. A concerted effort to encourage the faculty to read both generally and specifically about teaching will produce significant results. One cannot automatically assume that teachers in an Adventist school will study Ellen White’s volumes about Christian education. After a particular book is selected for year-long discussion, times for studying specific chapters can be chosen by each department. Also, panels can be appointed to conduct a group discussion with the entire faculty. At Andrews University we see that our teachers receive THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION. The college administration could select one or two articles appearing in the magazine and discuss how these items relate to their college. Perhaps someone could review the thesis of an article and lead a discussion about its relevance to teaching concerns. At Andrews University we have ordered a club subscription to the journal Improving College and University Teaching and have asked departments to use this as the basis for departmental discussions. From time to time, the deans and other members of administration meet with the departments to review their efforts to stimulate good teaching, based on their reading of these materials and attendance at special conferences. Beyond this, many books and articles on great teachers can profitably be discussed by a college faculty. All of these activities will help create an atmosphere in which serious attention is given to good teaching.

2. Give attention to particular aspects of teaching and learning. Concentrate on special aspects of learning. For example, grading may need general discussion. Are grades too high? It is interesting to accumulate information about the cumulative grade-point average of a particular faculty, especially when this average is compared with that of another college. Division-wide statistics can be helpful, particularly if the information is generalized and individualized schools are not listed. Comparisons of departments within a school can also be useful. Out of such discussions, the individual teacher can discover where he fits into the overall grading situation. Some teachers need to loosen up a bit, while others need to tighten their grading procedures.

Similar programs can be developed for other needs, such as the preparation of syllabi, testing, particular styles of teaching, and other areas of interest. What constitutes a good lecture, how to have an effective discussion period, or what teaching techniques are most effective can be helpful topics for discussion.

If they are well planned, a series of meetings between the administration and faculty can be useful at the beginning of the school year. Such meetings can
provide a forum for participants to concentrate on the philosophy of Christian education and general school objectives, and can provide goals that will help the faculty measure their classroom efforts.

We cannot be certain that all of our teachers are equally successful in infusing a Christian world view into their particular subject. Our students have a right to know the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s world view as it applies to issues that emerge in the study of a particular discipline. Too frequently in the past, student and parental criticism may have been correct when it asserted that there was little difference in the teaching of some courses between an Adventist school and a secular college.

3. Conduct a seminar for new teachers. At our campus, all new teachers are required to attend such a seminar, whether they have taught for 20 years or are just beginning. The mix of veteran and novice teachers is very helpful. In conducting such a seminar I have consistently used two books, Education and Teaching Tips for Beginning College Teachers. Reading assignments are given, and a senior faculty member is invited to discuss with the seminar an area in which he or she is recognized as an expert. Topics include approaches to teaching, philosophy, techniques, and other areas of interest. Each teacher is asked to bring a course syllabus, which will be discussed by the group as the nature of the course is presented. In this way a teacher can get immediate opinions about the strengths and weaknesses of his course outline. Particular problems that teachers are currently encountering are also brought to the group. This seminar meets for two hours a week during the first term.

4. Evaluate teaching. A regular teaching evaluation program should be implemented in every college. This program should include self-evaluation by teachers. Such evaluation can usually be done whenever the teacher is being considered for promotion. A form can be supplied asking the teacher to describe his personal philosophy of education and how he implements this philosophy in the classroom. The teacher should be asked to assess how well he has succeeded in meeting his personal objectives. The department chairman can then give an appraisal of the teacher, based on periodic interviews and the teacher’s evaluation. Next, the academic dean can give an overall statement about the chairman’s appraisal and

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SAMPLE SEARCH

? S INFLATION
1 1993 INFLATION

? S CONSUMER?
2 1533 CONSUMER?

? S CREDIT
3 699 CREDIT

? S DEBT
4 256 DEBT

? C 3 OR 4
5 917 3 OR 4

? C 2 AND 5
6 202 2 AND 5

? C 1 AND 6
7 13 1 AND 6

? T 7/2/1-5

Search produced 13 citations to articles dealing with inflation, consumer debt, and consumer credit. One of these citations is shown below.

7/29
1440344

BETTER-BUY-NOW MENTALITY. (CONSUMERS BUY & HOPE TO PAY LATER)
TIME v115 p682(FEB 18 1980 COEDN: TYMCA
DESCRIPTORS: CONSUMPTION (ECONOMICS)UNITED STATES; INFLATION (FINANCE)FORECASTS; CONSUMER CREDIT-RATES.

materials by key words in title and by subjects in combination using the boolean operators or, and, not.

Telefacsimile

Telefacsimile, the transmission and reproduction in printed form of complete documents through telephone lines, promises to further revolutionize interlibrary loan and increase the benefits of joining computer networks. This technology will make cooperative acquisition programs more attractive because documents owned by one library can be quickly transmitted to another library without waiting for mail delivery. Ownership is not a critical issue if telefacsimile is an option. Cooperative acquisition is a goal of the research libraries that have joined RLIN. Whether telefacsimile becomes a part of their program will depend on how the technology develops.

Electronic Mail

Telefacsimile is one way to transmit documents. Electronic mail is another means that may be used extensively by library computer networks in the future. The document is keyed into a computer terminal and transmitted by regular telephone lines to other terminals where it can be read. Once received, the document may be indexed, annotated, or redistributed without generating a paper copy. Thus, libraries would be assured that their patrons would have access to necessary reference sources—materials that often disappear when they are stored in printed form. In libraries the materials most likely to disappear in printed form are indexes and abstracts, handbooks, directories, technical reports, patents, standards, and the science journal.

Conclusion

Computers will play an increasingly important role in the operation of all libraries. Small academic libraries can best increase their efficiency and service by participating in library computer networks. Indeed, in order for small academic libraries to progress into the future as viable entities, capable of supporting the academic programs of their mother institutions, they must become participants in computerized library networks.

FOOTNOTES


How to Foster Great College Teaching

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the self-appraisal, either sustaining them or making observations about the teaching performance from other information he has obtained. When the above technique is utilized, advancement in academic rank and tenure can be granted on a rational basis.

Increasingly, teaching evaluation includes student opinion. Schools will find it helpful to develop a program that permits their consumers—students—to give their opinions about the teaching they have experienced. Students can give their impressions about a course, its objectives, the teaching methods, whether they are motivated, and whether they feel they are receiving a Christian world view from that particular course. If such an evaluation is done throughout the entire school, department comparisons may be very helpful in improving the teaching program.

5. Reward good teaching. Recognition of good teachers can be very helpful. Presentation by such teachers of their teaching philosophy and the way they view their work can be an inspiration to other teachers. A financial award that accompanies the selection of an outstanding teacher can be a beneficial stimulus, for it...
indicates that the college does indeed place great importance on excellence in teaching.

**Hallmarks of Great Teachers**

As we think about a program to encourage great teaching, let me list some of the hallmarks of great teachers:

1. A great teacher plans. Good instruction flows from an orderly, planned sequence of experiences; a syllabus gives the student an understanding of just what is expected of him and when; and provides optimal use of the time the student has invested in the course.

2. A great teacher creates a love for learning because he is personally interested in what he is teaching. He, in turn, passes on this excitement to his students as he stresses the importance of the subject they are studying.

3. A great teacher knows his subject well, and is able to place it in the wider context of its discipline. Further, he also shows his students the relevance of the topic to the broad range of human experience.

4. A great teacher helps his students gain insights beyond his own capacity by stimulating them to investigate the subject in greater depth. An enthusiasm for reading is the best gift that a teacher can give his students. If the teacher is well read, students will discern this in their daily contact in the classroom. The excitement he feels about his discipline will inspire his students to do additional reading on the topic.

5. A great teacher helps his students see that the most powerful tool that can be obtained from a course is a sharpening of their ability to express ideas clearly and concisely in conversation, public presentations, and especially in writing.

6. A great teacher knows his students and loves them.

7. A great teacher’s personal qualities identify him as a person apart. A great teacher’s common sense and ability to think clearly enable him to identify with the student and provide help even in areas unrelated to his subject. A great teacher often has a sense of humor that helps him—and his students—see the lighter side of life. In a real sense, a great teacher is able to combine intelligence with emotion, whether the subject be serious or humorous. The great teacher brings together the head and the heart in the best interest of the student.

**What Will She Do Tomorrow?**

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among schools, home, and the church must be explored. Curricula combining on-the-job experiences with college- and church-related experiences must be expanded. The role of integrating our faith with all learning experiences, especially for those who seek to work in the traditional professional areas, must be examined.

Efforts must be made to see that all groups within the church have access to adequate training.

The dilemma posed at the beginning of this paper is neither a true dilemma nor an easy one to solve. Yet it is one which must be continually examined; it is one in which the balance between the two emphases must be continually monitored; and it is one which will never be solved until our Lord returns. The author believes that higher education as a role in training people for work must be greatly expanded to meet the needs of the church, its members, and the society in which they live.

**Teacher Reaction**

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New approaches to traditional standards may be needed. Whether the student chooses to attend a day or a boarding academy, the school must adapt its program to prepare him for an effective adult life—lived, we would hope, as a contributing member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.—Richard Osborn.

**SDA Colleges—A World of Difference**

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but also must teach Biblically based values to its students.

JAE: If our schools are providing the education needed for today, why are they not bursting at the seams? Why are so many SDA college students going to secular colleges, especially community colleges? Why did undergraduate enrollment in our system drop 3.38 percent this year at a time when all other colleges within the U.S. gained 1.6 percent and all private colleges gained 1.1 percent new freshmen?

Reynolds: While there are undoubtedly many factors, I have to reach the conclusion that as a church we may be lessening our historical commitment to Christian education. This should be a cause for concern. The church must take steps to reverse the drift toward a lessened commitment to education.

1. To begin with, we must clearly articulate the colleges’ institutional mission. If we are to persuade others, we must clearly understand how our mission will affect the individual student.

2. Each institution must understand how it can help potential students and how it can convince students that they can benefit from its program. Institutions must be true to their commitment and must fulfill the claims they make for themselves.

Colleges with a carefully defined mission and manage-